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## Laval faces steep bill for fireplace removal

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## Price tag for Laval's Aquatic Complex project rises to

**\$125 million**

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# Chomedey condo owners face steep bill for fireplace removal

*Some buildings erected after 1985 had non-conforming chimney firewalls*



**MARTIN C. BARRY**  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter  
For The Laval News  
marty@newsfirst.ca

When Shiva Ashtari and her family moved into a condominium on Charles Best St. in Chomedey eleven years ago, they weren't aware that the fireplace which had been installed when the eight-unit building was completed in 1986 didn't meet construction and fire code requirements.

## A fire code issue

After deciding a little more than five years ago to go ahead and buy their unit, they found out that condos in Laval with fireplaces like the one in their home, which are mostly decorative but still useable for burning wood, had to be upgraded or removed in order to conform to the code.

"We have been told by the service incendie de Laval that all condos with fireplaces like ours (the fancy ones, that are mostly for entertainment, not generating heat), need to be removed completely from the building construction," Ashtari said in an e-mail to the Laval News.

## Not conforming to code

The reasoning, according to the LFD and the municipal fire code, is that some of the building's firewalls aren't separated between the condos, and if a fire breaks out in a condo unit, it can spread to others. Although constructed in 1986, the design of the building's fireplace and chimney emplacements didn't conform to new fire code regulations which came into effect in 1985.

"We have given our consent that we're not using the fireplaces, but it's not enough as even not using the fireplace," added Ashtari, noting that an initial estimate for removing the

fireplaces and resolving the problem has been estimated at a cost of around \$4,000 for each of affected condo apartments.

## High cost of removal

"This is understandable as our safety is very important. However, the cost of completely removing the system is very high," Ashtari said that she and virtually all the other condo owners find this outrageously costly and are seeking a less expensive way of resolving the problem.

In the meantime, she said the Laval Fire Department has continued to press the residents to carry out the fireplace and chimney removals as instructed and that she received a formal notice from a city lawyer advising her family to start the fireplace/chimney removal process.

## Unanswered questions

"I understand that it's the firecode and everything," Ashtari said in an interview with the Laval News. "But my concern is: why isn't there another solution but for removing these things completely? It's been there been there for years. What happened to the fire code before?"

Reached at the Laval Fire Department, LFD spokesperson Véronique Maheu explained to the Laval News that Régie du Bâtiment du Québec regulations governing the installation of fireplaces and chimneys with firewalls in multi-unit dwellings weren't followed when a number of residential projects took place in Laval more than 30 years ago.

## RBQ rules not respected

"On each floor where there is an apartment and a technical space where the chimney is located, there should have been firewall separations," she said. "This has to be there so that if there is a fire in an apartment, the fire cannot make get through the technical space and make its way to the other floors of the building."

While acknowledging that in more recent



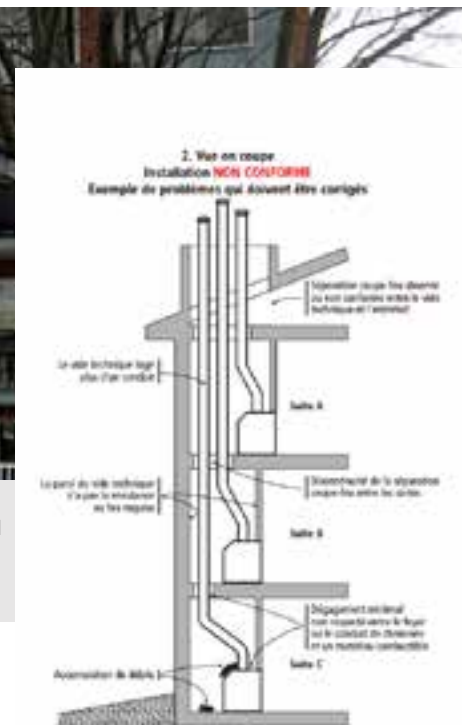
**According to LFD spokesperson Véronique Maheu, condo apartment buildings built in Laval during the mid-1980s often didn't conform to RBQ regulations requiring firewalls for fireplaces and chimneys.**

years, contractors started installing gas-operated fireplaces in newer condos, she said the vast majority of earlier builders "did not respect the requirements of the RBQ – the Régie du Bâtiment du Québec. And this is a situation that is generalized on our territory in this type of building."

## Owners have two options

According to Maheu, the condo owners are given two options. Firstly, they can hire a consulting engineer who will supervise and oversee that their fireplace/chimney installation is brought up to the conforming specifications for safe operation.

On the other hand, should some condo owners find the required upgrade work as too expensive, the fireplace and chimney can be removed, although the firewalls must be installed in the



**This diagram from a Régie du Bâtiment du Québec document on multi-unit building fireplace and chimney installation illustrates the problem.**

technical space to meet the current fire code specifications.

"This is a situation that a number of condo owners in multi-unit buildings with fireplaces in Laval are going through now," said Maheu, adding that the Laval Fire Department has been enforcing the rule for nearly a decade now.



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# OPINION & Editorial

## THAT'S WHAT I'M THINKING

Robert Vairo



### The Market dives, Dairy Farmers vs Consumers, Free Vitamin D.

A friend of mine who is not familiar with the stock market, much less what the acronyms stand for, like DOW, S&P 500, TSX etc., asked me "what is going on with the markets?" He was aware of something not being right but couldn't quite figure it out. I don't know that much more about it, but was able to sight the usual symptoms of what market investors call a "correction".

I told him, there seems to be a number of reasons. Nothing is wrong with the companies that lost billions in value last week. In many cases these corporations were overpriced. In other words, the value of their stock did not reflect the company's worth, or capitalization. Another reason is the fear of inflation, now real at nearly 5% and the anxiety it will bring, higher interest rates, expected shortly. And investors, institutional and retail, who increased stock value by the billions during the pandemic, are now selling, cashing in. An example is Netflix down 20%, Amazon down 10%, Peloton down 24% (likely because it's reported it would pause production of its hot selling exercise machines). SHOPIFY, CanAada's great e-commerce enterprise was valued at more than the Royal Bank earlier this month. It lost its title as Canada's biggest publicly traded company plunging from a high of \$2189.32 a share a month ago, to a low of approximately \$1100.00 at the TSX (Toronto Stock Exchange) close last Friday. That's a drop of nearly 50%. Will it come back to its glorious highs, like other stocks that have dropped? Likely, in time, because Shopify and other companies that have lost value this month, are doing nothing wrong.

It's the nature of the market, but a very scary event, especially for seniors who use to rely on high pay outs from Canada Savings bonds and GIC's. In the glory days of the 1990's with mortgage rates at 15%, these savings instruments paid out a handsome 16% to 20% interest, with no risk attached. But today, with returns on savings at less than 1%, the stock market is where to invest to stay ahead, if not afloat. So are cryptocurrencies, that are also taking a dive. If they are not into real estate, and revenue properties, to supplement their income (renting and dealing with tenants is not for everyone) then they are left with little choice but to pay a financial advisor to buy them mutual funds. They have often chosen to invest themselves, without the added expense of 'the middle man', through self-directed investment accounts, and other online brokerage and self-management firms, that charge little or no trade commissions or management fees. No matter who or what

investment method is used, last week especially, everyone suffered.

The crash of 2008 took four years to recover. In 2015, it took over a year. So as history has taught us, we will resurface, and see company valuations slowly but surely regain prominence, only sometimes in another economic sector, and in varying periods. After suffering losses, for some it's the end, and never again will they invest in the stock market. Others see it as just another "buying opportunity".

I read something unusual recently. New Zealand criticized Canada and sided with the United States. In fact, the headline in the Financial Post read "New Zealand cheers Canada's loss in the dairy dispute". I did too. Not our loss, but our win. Canada's overly protected dairy farmers, with the "supply management system that has historically used high tariffs on imports to shield the domestic dairy producers from competition" from the U.S. and Europe, results in Canadians paying much, much more for milk, cheese and all other dairy products. Canada circumvented the North American free trade agreement by passing on the quotas to Canadian dairy companies who have little interest in rivalry, at our expense. And our Prime Minister is just fine with that, always in support of the Quebec vote and the powerful Quebec dairy lobby. Finding Canada in the wrong will hopefully lead to more competitive prices for milk and dairy products and help in lowering our atrociously inflated grocery bills.

While the Trudeau liberals say they are "protecting Canadians with more stringent gun laws", that same government is eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for criminals who use guns in the commission of an offence. That makes so much sense, doesn't it? Meanwhile Canada's homicide rate is up 7% from a year ago. (Statistics Canada)

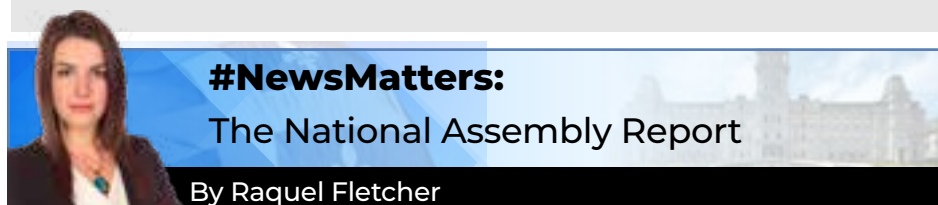
Why are politicians and especially our health officials failing to mention that a strong immune system is also a great fighter against COVID? In Britain, they are giving out vitamin D, free! Seniors are receiving a four-month supply of the vitamin that health officials agree, "optimizing the immune response to mitigate clinical illness for any given viral load". If only our leading medical teams had the wisdom to help out our seniors stuck indoors, with no sunlight, in March of 2020.

Stay healthy. Walk, eat well, keep smiling.

That's what I'm Thinking.

Robert Vairo

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## #NewsMatters:

### The National Assembly Report

By Raquel Fletcher

### Premier calls for patience as pressure grows to reopen economy

The journalist was skillful to disguise any hint of desperation in her voice, but the question spoke for itself. "If we did everything right, why are we still in this so deeply?" she asked Premier François Legault at his press conference last Thursday.

Quebec had just announced that it would not be relaxing current health measures in the immediate future because people are still dying.

"It is my duty is to be responsible, to protect the lives of Quebecers, so let's be careful, let's be patient. Think of the staff in our hospitals. We will eventually get out of this together," Legault said.

### Why are things so dire?

The premier said he knows how fed-up people are and praised Quebecers for their solidarity. Hence, the burning question: if Quebecers have done everything that has been asked of them over two years of this global health crisis, why then are things still so dire?

The restrictive measures currently in place are imperative to protect Quebec hospitals from breaking apart at the seams as they continue to be over capacity, especially in ICUs.

"I cannot compare really with what's happening in other provinces and states, but we know that right

now the situation (in Quebec) is really tight," the premier said. "We want to be able to continue to treat everybody and not delay important and urgent treatments."

The premier acknowledged, however, the pressure he was under to reopen certain parts of the economy.

### Opposition cites "devastating impact"

Liberal Leader Dominique Anglade called for the province to allow children and teens to participate in sports again, citing the "devastating impact" the current situation is having on the mental health of young Quebecers. This plea was echoed again Friday by Quebec Solidaire's Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois during a meeting between the premier and some opposition leaders. Anglade opted out of the meeting after declaring earlier in the week that the CAQ government had lost control of the pandemic.

Quebec is also hearing from bar and restaurant owners who remain closed with no timeline for reopening. To add insult to injury, neighbouring Ontario announced it would allow these establishments to reopen at 50 per cent capacity at the end of the month.

"Please help us!" was how one Montreal bar owner

summed up his desperation Friday.

Martin Guimond, the owner of Le Saint-Bock in downtown Montreal said he is only \$25,000 away from bankruptcy and still has rent and municipal taxes to pay.

### Morale at a low

Quebecers' morale is at a low, but the premier tried to remain optimistic, declaring that Quebec has now reached the peak of the fifth wave in terms of the number of hospitalizations and things should be improving soon. Twelve thousand health care workers are still missing from the system, mostly due to being sick with COVID-19 themselves, but Legault hopes many of them will return to work this week.

"So Plan B to reduce services will not be necessary," Legault said, referring to a contingency plan made public earlier in the week in the event hospitalizations continued to rise. "It was responsible to have a Plan B, but I want to be very clear, this Plan B has never been applied."

The province also announced a plan to reach out to the 565,000 unvaccinated adults in the province.

Junior health minister Lionel Carmant will be announcing the details this week. The government is particularly concerned about vulnerable populations, including immigrants who do not speak either French or English, who may have fallen through the cracks.

"We are making an extra effort to give the maximum number of chances to those who did not receive the information," said health minister Christian Dubé.

It's also a last effort to give another chance to the health network to handle this latest wave that can only be fought by once again putting the economy on pause.



# Laval's Aquatic Complex project now estimated at \$125 million



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Recent word that the cost of Laval's planned aquatic complex will be at least \$50 million higher than the initially-estimated \$75 million cost has provided opposition members of Laval City Council with ammunition to accuse the Boyer administration of reckless spending and mismanagement.

Last week, the City of Laval's executive-committee announced it is recommending that city council vote in favour adding the \$50 million.

## 'Important project,' says Boyer

"Through this, Laval is giving itself the means to bring forth one of the most important infrastructure projects on its territory, while approaching its goal of offering to all residents high-quality sports equipment for leisure, learning and excellence," the city said in a statement.

"To be able to offer more sports infrastructures is a priority for our administration," said Mayor Stéphane Boyer. "I am pleased to be finally be able to offer to the people of Laval these installations which will be completely accessible and recreational.

## More swimming time

"This project, anticipated for several years now, will increase considerably the availability of swimming hours and swimming lessons offered to the population, in addition to allowing our athletes from the region to train there."

According to the city, the \$50 million additional sum for the project will become official with the passing of a new by-law. The aquatic complex project will also be the subject of a public consultation by the city in the coming weeks.

## Positive impacts, says city

Despite the cost increase, the city maintains that the aquatic complex will have positive impacts on different levels, including lifting Laval's status internationally, generating short and longer term economic benefits, and encouraging physical activity by Laval's population.

Despite the extra cost, Laval's property tax payers won't be on the hook for the entire amount. While the federal government has agreed to provide \$10 million through its cultural and recreational community infrastructure program, the provincial government is providing another \$10 million through a similar program.

## Some basic facts on the Aquatic Complex project:

- The project includes three swimming pools (one recreational, another of 50 metres and a diving basis with a 10-metre diving tower. There will also be a multifunctional training studio and a physical fitness workout room.
- The Aquatic Complex is expected to host important national and provincial swim competitions.
- It is expected to accommodate 875 swimmers and 500 spectators.
- The sports expected to be practiced at the Aquatic Complex will include swimming, synchronized swimming, le water polo, diving, aquatic exercise, life-saving training and free swim events.
- It is expected to contribute to the overall development of athletics in various sports in the Laval region.
- It will be located near the Cosmodôme and Autoroute 15 for easy access.

## Opposition reacts

At Action Laval, two members of the opposition party reacted strongly to the new of the Aquatic Complex's added \$50 million cost. "This has been a complete fiasco and a failure of management from the beginning," Action Laval said in a statement, while adding, "Mayor Boyer would rather double the budget than admit failure."

In addition, party leaders pointed out that the complex won't be serving for the closing games of the upcoming Jeux du Québec, as had been planned in the beginning.



The foundations for Laval's future Aquatic Complex are already in place on a site next to the Cosmodôme in central Laval. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

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## City lists three priorities in 2022 tri-year capital investments budget

According to Laval's latest three-year capital investments budget, the city plans to spend \$1.38 billion over the next three years on 170 projects and programs, including 159 in 2022.

"The tabling of the PTI is a unique moment since it allows light to be shed on the priorities of our administration," Mayor Stéphane Boyer said in a statement. "To no one's surprise, the projects we are prioritizing are those that will allow us to improve our services to families in the districts, to protect the environment and to assure the security of everyone in Laval."

### The city plans to spend the money each year like this:

**\$399.8 million in 2022;**  
**\$510.7 million in 2023;**  
**\$468.7 million in 2024.**

The city says the following projects are being scheduled to be implemented over the next few years:

### Infrastructures in neighborhoods

These works include major renovations at the Maison André-Benjamin-Papineau near Sainte-Dorothée; the creation of new sports infrastructures for tennis, basketball and the swimming complex; and the creation of new infrastructures in Berthiaume-du-Tremblay Park in Chomedey.



### Territorial security

The city will be building new infrastructure for police and fire services, including a new police station for western districts, a new fire station, and the modernization of computerized equipment used for security purposes.

As well, the city plans to implement new measures for traffic calming, and for flood control in areas where rising flood waters are an ongoing concern.

### Environnement and ecological transition

The PTI budget also plans some significant measures for the environment and forward ecological transition, including: \$58.9 million for the acquisition and improvement of natural spaces, including some near the Berges des Baigneurs, des Goélands and Quatre-Vents.

Sums are also allotted for the improvement and upgrading of Laval's roadways and streets, and for the improvement of water infrastructure.

## Action Laval reacts to city's 2022 budget

The Action Laval opposition party reacted swiftly last week to the Boyer administration's 2022 first capital investments budget since coming into office in November last year.

"Being used to simple solutions, the incumbent team that took up the reins of the city last fall is repeating what it learned over the years: to fix a problem, just add money," city councillors David De Cotis (Saint-Bruno) and Aglaia Revelakis (Chomedey) said in a statement.

As such, they see the latest PTI budget as lacking imagination, although it raises expenses for services. "The city continues to accumulate important surpluses year after year on the backs of citizens," De Cotis said. "This is a practice that must stop. This administration should be managing the money of citizens in a responsible manner."

Noting that the population of Laval has risen by 1.2 per cent since 2019, Action Laval added that during the same period the number of City of Laval employees has gone up by 15.1 per cent, mostly within the administration. This year alone, staffing has risen by 6.5 per cent, they said.

"When they have surpluses, they look for new ways to spend," said Revelakis. "The application of sound principles of management in order to reduce the tax bills is not part of their wisdom."







Despite the rising price tag, which is now at \$125 million, the City of Laval says the Aquatic Complex project will pay off in economic spinoffs for the region and a better quality of life for residents.

◀ Continued from page 5

### Disastrous waste, says Cifelli

« My colleagues and I are flabbergasted with the announcement,” said Val-des-Arbres city councillor Archie Cifelli. “At a time when Laval is lacking in sports and cultural infrastructures, this wastage is disastrous.”

Action Laval is calling the Aquatic Complex project the “poisoned gift bequeathed by former Mayor Demers to the citizens of Laval,” while maintaining that no original major project was delivered by the Demers team during the eight years they were in power.

### No mega-budgets, says Piché

“If it had been us dealing with the money of taxpayers, we would have built at least two interior public pools, one in the east and another in the west,” said Saint-François city councillor Isabelle Piché. “Our citizens want services and infrastructures in their neighborhoods, not projects with mega-budgets that they will never use anyway.”

Noting that the City of Laval’s population will soon reach 450,000 inhabitants, Action Laval said the city is gaining a reputation that its sports facilities and other infrastructures are old, worn out and no longer up to the challenges of large city.

### The backstory on Laval’s Aquatics Complex project

The City of Laval launched the architectural competition for the aquatic complex in 2016, after years of speculation on what Laval’s next big project would be after the construction of the Place Bell multipurpose arena. When finally announced in January 2017, the cost of the aquatic complex was pegged at \$61.1 million and the city hoped to complete it by 2020.

### Postponed after high bids

However, in 2018 the city’s executive-committee announced that a call for tenders for the construction of the superstructure, building envelope and other aspects of the building were cancelled because the lowest of three bids came in 46 per cent higher than the city budgeted.

At that time, measures were taken to protect the foundations which were already in place in view of the approaching winter season. Laval city council spent more than \$710,000 to pay for the application of a waterproofing membrane on the concrete. The city said this waterproofing work would have been necessary anyway as part of the regular construction process.

### Another delay last year

By February 2020 when it had long become apparent the aquatics complex project was still far from getting underway, the city announced yet another delay: the cancellation of the contract with the architectural firm that was mandated to produce the initial plans. The recently-announced cost increase is the latest development in this ongoing saga.

## STL news January 2022



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# YEAR IN REVIEW 2021

PART 3

## We take a thoughtful look

### SEPTEMBER



While unveiling a slate of candidates running for the Laval region's federal seats in the Sept. 20 general election, a senior official with the Conservative Party noted that the four chosen runners were entrepreneurs, business managers and professionals who were truly representative because of their dedicated community involvement in Laval.

"I can tell you that from the moment they are elected as representatives in the Parliament of Canada, the team that is here today will take the interests of Laval to Ottawa, and not the interests of Ottawa and the Liberal Party to Laval," said Senator Leo Housakos.

A life-long Conservative, Housakos said he could remember back in the 1980s when the Conservatives succeeded in scoring a major breakthrough in Laval by electing Conservative MPs over a span of eight years. "And when we did it in 1984-88, it was the same type of individuals: people connected to the community, professionals, business people and people who were doing politics for the right reasons."



The owners of the Marché 440 mall and public market on Autoroute 440 in central Laval were eagerly waiting for a green-light from urban planning officials with the city before forging ahead with one of the largest property re-development strategies ever undertaken in Laval.

With an estimated investment of more than \$300 million, the value of the Rizzuto family's Aparté au Marché commercial and residential campus would be exceeded only by a few recent Laval re-development projects – the most notable perhaps being Groupe Montoni's \$450 million Espace Montmorency underway in downtown Laval.



While a Chomedey landlord won an almost \$30,000 judgement against a tenant who was held liable for extensive damages to an apartment, the owner said they still had numerous hurdles to jump before they could even hope to collect a settlement.

"Honestly, this could be the worst tenant of all time," said Bill Choudalos, whose father, Stelios, had owned and lived in the Châtelaine Ave. duplex in Chomedey for half a century.



In keeping with a tradition she started four years ago, Fabre Liberal MNA Monique Sauvé presented National Assembly Medals last week to ten residents of her riding in recognition of their many years contributing to the community.

"Through your devotion, your commitment, your involvement and your leadership, all of you contribute to an exceptional quality of life for the families, the children and the senior citizens of Fabre," Sauvé said during a presentation evening held at the Château Taillefer Lafon in Laval-Ouest.

Gang violence and firearms incidents had escalated to such an extent over the previous year in the City of Laval that Mayor Marc Demers addressed the problem in his opening statement during the webcast Sept. 7 public meeting of Laval city council.

The City of Laval had joined together with the municipalities of Montreal, Quebec City, Longueuil and Gatineau to ask the leading candidates running in the upcoming federal election to clearly state their positions on banning assault weapons and establishing tighter controls on assault weapons and handguns.

"We made this gesture due to the upsurge of violent acts in the various areas of Quebec," said Demers, while insisting that in spite of the violence, Laval remained a relatively safe and secure place compared to other cities in Canada and across North America.

A Montreal lawyer and language rights expert predicted during a preliminary public hearing on Quebec's Bill 96 that the CAQ government's controversial Bill 101 update, if passed intact, will trigger "a constitutional crisis like never before" in Canada.

That crisis could occur in the next two to five years, Michael Bergman, who has pleaded before the Supreme Court of Canada and has lectured on Canadian language rights and constitutional law at McGill University, said during the opening presentation of a webinar on Bill 96 sponsored by the Quebec Community Groups Network.



The 15th anniversary of FILIA's annual Walk A Thon marked the second time the outdoor fundraiser took place in the City of Laval, while also reflecting how increasing numbers of Montrealers with Greek roots were gradually been migrating from Park Extension to Laval.

While FILIA's mission at one time was to provide assistance

to Greek women of the Park Extension Hellenic community and later throughout Montreal, the organization's mandate had expanded and it was increasingly serving seniors in Laval.

According to polling results for the 2021 Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board elections on Sept. 26, incumbent chairman Paolo Galati won the race, outpacing challenger Noemia Onofre de Lima.

In the 2021 board elections, the first in a good number of years, voters were called upon to cast votes only for the chairperson position, as all the board commissioners had been acclaimed in September 2020. "I am pleased that the electors of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board have entrusted me with this second mandate and I am already back at work," said Galati.



### OCTOBER



A simmering dispute between the City of Laval and some Chomedey residents over traffic calming near the corner of Hurtubise St. and 100th Ave. reached a boiling point when dozens of supporters signed a petition demanding the traffic department remove "lane reduction" markings that were painted onto the street in hopes of slowing speeding motorists.

According to Peter Caruana, who started the petition with his daughter Gabrielle, he and others had been complaining that a stop sign should be put in at the corner to replace yellow lines and traffic bollards the city painted on 100th between Couturier and Hurtubise to slow cars down by reducing the traffic flow to one lane.

Caruana said a stop sign that used to be in place at the corner was removed around a decade ago. "What we want is a simple thing: a three-way stop sign," he said in an interview with The Laval News. "It would help ease the pain."



In memorandum presented to the National Assembly committee working on the provincial government's Bill 96 to strengthen Quebec's language rules, the Quebec Community Groups Network said that even though the French language in Quebec "can and should be protected," Bill 96 is not the way to go about it.



# back at last year's news

MARTIN C. BARRY



"Bill 96 is deeply problematic," said QCGN president Marlene Jennings, reading from the conclusion of the English-language community lobby group's statement. "Its measures are based on outdated and odious approaches to enforcing the use of the French language. It will create barriers and mistrust. It upsets a social and linguistic peace that has lasted for decades."



Findings in Quebec ombudswoman Marie Rinfret's 2020-2021 annual report raised serious questions about the provincial government's ability to ensure the quality and integrity of the services it provided in the previous year during the COVID-19 crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic had only accentuated already problematic situations in the provision of public services, notes the ombudswoman. She said the pandemic created and exacerbated many vulnerabilities for an incalculable number of individuals.

"We think immediately of the full brunt of the tragedies in residential and long-term care centres during the first wave," said the ombudswoman's office.



With COVID-19 infection rates stabilizing in certain areas of Canada but still out of control in places like Alberta and Saskatchewan, the head of the country's largest professional medical advocacy group recommended that what Canada needed was a "functional national vaccine passport or certificate."

"You know, we've been talking about this for months," said Dr. Katherine Smart, president of the Ottawa-based Canadian Medical Association, said following a national emergency summit on the Covid crisis. "It's not complicated. It's unclear why that solution is not yet available for Canadians to make public spaces safer."

"We need to be reactive to situations as they evolve to make sure we're increasing public health mitigation strategies in certain areas that aren't doing well," she added. While there was no comprehensive and nation-wide vaccine passport program, all provinces and territories, including Quebec, had implemented vaccine passport or proof of vaccination systems on their own.



The Royal LePage House Price Survey and Market Survey Forecast released in October revealed signs of a shift to a healthier real estate market for the first time since the onset of the pandemic early last year.

But at the same time, sales figures for the Laval and North Shore regions showed property sales prices steadily going up. As the number of available properties declined, demand remained constant, thus fueling price increases.

"Before the pandemic, the rate of home price appreciation in Laval was more moderate, falling behind many Montreal neighbourhoods," said Georges Gaucher, manager of Royal LePage Village in Montreal. "Over the last few months, the North Shore of Montreal and Laval have been among the most in demand areas for residential properties, and consequently where property prices increased the most."

In the hopes perhaps of building up voter support in Laval's central and western districts in time for the Nov. 7 municipal elections, mayoralty candidate Michel Poissant's Laval Citoyens party was pledging to build a new skatepark on land owned by the City of Laval on Souvenir Boulevard just east of Laval Senior Academy.

"Laval Citoyens is proud to present this major project for our youths, because it is important to offer them sports, leisure and arts infrastructures that allow them to channel their energy in a healthy way while using facilities created for them, but while seeing that our youths aren't exposed to bad influences," Poissant's party said in a statement.

## NOVEMBER

A misprint on a pre-election voter information card sent out to virtually every address in Chomedey threatened to sow confusion among the district's electors about which candidate to support on Nov. 7 in the municipal elections.

Incumbent Chomedey city councillor Aglaia Revelakis, who was seeking her third term as Chomedey's municipal elected representative, said it was the first time since her first victory in 2013 that she had run into this sort of problem. "I never heard of this happening before," she said. Despite the damage, the elections office has no plans to distribute a corrected version of the voter information card to thousands of households in Chomedey.



A special report by the Quebec Ombudswoman's office on access to provincial retirement and long-term care residences recommended the government develop by September 2022 a centralized data base allowing information on vacancies and available rooms to be shared across Quebec.

"Every year in Quebec, 21,000 people who can't remain safely at home come up against a complicated access machine that is hard to understand, that involves lengthy wait times and is discouraging," said Marie Rinfret.

"These people, who are experiencing a crucial stage of their life, suddenly find themselves in complete disarray, uprooted and forced to move to a new environment which is often not the one they expected," she added.



The City of Laval said it had come to an agreement with a provincial consumer rights group to provide financial assistance to house buyers from Laval who were victimized by the bankruptcy of the Bel-Habitat house-building company the previous summer.

"The City of Laval is continuing to take all the measures necessary within our municipal abilities by deploying resources to come to the assistance to the citizens impacted so that they can turn the page on this unfortunate situation," said Mayor Marc Demers.

It was announced that the case of a 7-year-old girl from Chomedey who died under unexplained circumstances in January 2021 would be the object of a preliminary inquiry beginning at the end of May 2022.

Up to a dozen witnesses are expected to provide testimony during the hearing that will be taking place from May 30 to June 10. The girl's mother is currently facing charges of assault and criminal negligence causing death.

If there was one thing consistent about Action Laval since the municipal party's inception more than eight years ago, it was Chomedey city councillor Aglaia Revelakis's ability to win the district's Laval city council seat from the very beginning and with overwhelming support.

The Nov. 7 municipal elections municipal elections were no exception. Revelakis, who had just finished her second term, handily won Chomedey for Action Laval/Team Sophie Trottier with 52.19 per cent support. Revelakis was surrounded by volunteers and friends at her campaign headquarters on Favreau St. on election night as the returns came in.

"This is the district that pulls Action Laval up," she said. "I want to thank my team. I had an incredible team behind me. We did all that we had to do in order for us to win. And without my volunteers, I would not have been able to do this."

With Laval's city elections over on the evening of Nov. 7, Stéphane Boyer clearly won the mayoralty race for the Mouvement lavallois, receiving 41.53 per cent support from the City of Laval's voters.

As the dust settled, the new seat count in Laval city council showed the Mouvement lavallois having won 14 districts, Action Laval taking five, and the Parti Laval winning two. In an interview with the Laval News, the new mayor said he was "very proud of the results tonight. We see it as a vote of confidence in the Mouvement lavallois for the good work we've done for the last few years."



For more than just a few generations of Hellenic Montrealers, Demetris J. Yantsulis was a voice of reason they would often seek out when a reliable view on global affairs or Greek, Canadian or Quebec politics and history was needed.

On Nov. 3, Chomedey MNA Guy Ouellette paid homage in the Quebec National Assembly to the 86-year-old Demetris Yantsulis for all his years of service to Greeks in Laval and throughout the greater Montreal region. In addition to the spoken tribute, Ouellette would later also present the National Assembly Medal to Yantsulis, who without a doubt was one of the local Hellenic community's most esteemed elder statesmen.



# YEAR IN REVIEW 2021 PART 3

*While the pandemic dominated, there were many other newsmakers*

## DECEMBER



As the Covid pandemic wore on late last year, the labour union representing Canada Post workers was contesting the crown corporation's temporary suspension without pay of employees who were not complying with the federal government's order that they become fully

vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus.

"The postal union is not against Covid vaccination," said Alain Robitaille, president of the greater Montreal local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). "We are aware that it is the best solution possible for the population in general. We know that it is a good thing and we feel it is important to say so. However, what we are contesting to an arbitrator is that we feel there are alternatives for those who don't want to be vaccinated which are also valid – including frequent screening."

In a special report tabled in the National Assembly on how the COVID-19 crisis was managed in CHSLDs during the first wave of the pandemic, Quebec Ombudswoman Marie Rinfret made 27 recommendations, while clearly allowing the facts to suggest negligence on the part of the CAQ government.

"CHSLDs were the blind spot in bracing for COVID-19," said Rinfret. "The truth is that, above and beyond the CHSLDs, it was the residents who were cast aside when the attack against



In time for the December holiday season, the Centre De Pédiatrie Sociale Laval was launching its annual Guignolée, which would be held from Dec. 1-17 in the four corners of the city. After a year's break due to the Covid pandemic, the organization was back on the streets and in front of Laval businesses to raise awareness of social pediatrics in the community.

While the Laval Police Department admitted it had been working with the city's parking tickets department to issue citations to car owners whose license plate numbers the ticket agents jotted down, a legal expert consulted by the Laval News questioned the validity of the tickets, suggesting they might not stand up if contested in court.

Whatever ambiguities there might be, there was no doubt in the mind of George Ziakas that the partnership between the parking agents and the LPD, as well as the method they are using, was no more than a con job. "He writes up to 40 license plate numbers the days he is present without physically giving out any tickets," he told the Laval News.



Having recently announced his decision to take a salary cut along with four other Quebec mayors, newly-elected Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer was asking Quebec to pass a law setting the salaries paid to all elected municipal officials, rather than allowing them to decide what they are paid on their own.

Boyer announced during the election campaign and shortly after taking office that he would join three other Quebec mayors who agreed to reduce their salaries. According to an information booklet published by the city, Laval was also asking Quebec to standardize the salaries of all elected members of city councils across the province.



The Société de transport de Laval's ongoing labour dispute and rotating service disruptions were the focus of questions from a concerned resident to Mayor Stéphane Boyer and other elected officials during the first regular public meeting of Laval city council since the November municipal elections.

Mayor Boyer said the STL has been losing immense sums of money since the beginning of the Covid pandemic last year because of lower ridership, although he acknowledged the City of Laval and the Quebec government have been absorbing most of the impact.

"So, when there is talk of improving working conditions and remuneration, the will is there but this would require a particular financial maneuver, and not only in Laval but all over Quebec and elsewhere in the world, so there is this challenge to meet at the moment," he said.

In addition to her duties as the Liberal Member of Parliament for the riding of Vimy, Annie Koutrakis' workload would be a quite a bit heavier for at least the next year following her appointment by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as the Minister of Transport's Parliamentary Secretary. "It's always an honour when the Prime Minister shows confidence in the people on his team to help with the various cabinet portfolios," Koutrakis said in an interview with the Laval News.



While the City of Laval's latest operating budget called for the average property owner to pay just 1.9 per cent more in taxes in 2022, the \$969.9 million fiscal exercise included spending that was 4.3 per cent higher than it was last year.

Finance department officials said their priorities over the coming year would focus primarily on improving the security of residents as well as municipal employees, optimizing services to citizens, following sound environmental practices, enhancing the quality of life and managing finances responsibly.



After more than a dozen years in office, Mille-Îles Liberal MNA Francine Charbonneau says she will not be seeking a fifth term in the provincial general election taking place in October 2022. First elected in 2008, Charbonneau served as a cabinet minister under former Premier Philippe Couillard. From 2014 to 2018, she was Minister Responsible for Senior Citizens, as well as for families, and for anti-intimidation.



A groundbreaking ceremony was held on Dec. 13 marking the start of construction of the Giant Steps Autism Centre, a new facility that supporters said would make Quebec a leader in autism education, research and services across Canada.



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## Gun seized, two young men arrested in Laval

Officers from the Laval Police Department arrested two young males on weapons charges last week after they allegedly tried to flee from the police.

The LPD said that officers stopped a vehicle Thursday Jan. 20 around 5 p.m., following which the driver gave a fake name and tried to flee. The officers proceeded to arrest the two suspects, 21 and 22 years old respectively, while seizing a 9 mm. firearm.

Police placed the 21-year-old under arrest for possessing a firearm, breaching conditions, and obstruction of justice. At the same time, the 22-year-old was arrested for obstruction of justice and possessing a firearm illegally.

Both were in custody, pending court appear-

ances last Friday. The arrests were part of the province-wide Operation Centaure, an anti-gun trafficking and anti-violence program that the LPD is taking part in.

While announcing the arrests, the LPD noted that the City of Laval increased its budget to allow for the hiring of more staff on the Equinox Squadron as well, as in the force's criminal investigation division, thus increasing police presence throughout Laval's territory.

Anyone who believes they may have information about the arrested suspects is invited by the LPD to call their confidential Info-Line at 450 662-INFO (4636) or 911. The file number is LVL 220120-074.

## Laval man arrested as York Regional Police recover 50 stolen vehicles

Investigators with the York Regional Police just north of Toronto say Ali El-hage, age 20, of the City of Laval was among the suspects arrested following the recovery of 50 stolen vehicles valued at around \$3 million in an ongoing YRP probe called Project Extinction.

According to the YRP, in the past several years they received an increase in reports concerning thefts of vehicles from residential driveways. The majority of these occurred between midnight and 6 a.m.

Car thieves were using tools such as screwdrivers to gain access through the driver or passenger doors, while making certain not to set off alarms.

Once inside, an electronic device, typically

used by mechanics to reprogram the factory setting, would be connected to a port below the dashboard in order to program the vehicle to accept a key the thieves brought with them. The vehicle was then driven away.

The entire process only takes between 10 to 20 minutes, according to the YRP, and the stolen vehicles are typically sent overseas in shipping containers.

In the YRP Auto/Cargo Theft Unit's investigation, eight suspects were identified and seven were charged following search warrants executed at two residences and a commercial property. At the same time, police seized \$80,000 in cash.

## Police intervene when Laval man barricades against bailiffs

A major police standoff got underway in Laval on the afternoon of Tuesday Jan. 18 after a man reacted badly to being served some legal papers by bailiffs.

Two bailiffs arrived outside an apartment on Laurentides St., near Sand St. in Laval's Auteuil sector of just before 1 p.m. Although police weren't informed as to what kind of legal notice the bailiffs were serving the man, he reacted in a way that alarmed the bailiffs enough to call the police.

Although he didn't make any threats, an LPD spokesperson said the bailiffs decided to walk a distance from the address to call for assistance to get their job done. When police finally arrived, according to police, the man barricaded himself in his dwelling and remained there past 6 p.m., alone apparently the whole time.

While no one was injured during the incident,



no threats were made, and there was no clear evidence of the use or potential use of a weapon, as per the procedure used by police in such situations, they continued attempts to establish contact with him to ensure the situation was under control.

To that effect, there was a major response team set up on the street, with firefighters, mental health responders and others ready to intervene if necessary.

## Man, 40, arrested after going behind walls at Cité de la Santé

A middle-age man was placed under arrest by the LPD last week at Laval's Cité de la Santé general hospital after it was discovered he had entered a crawl space next to the emergency department while trying to get away.

After initially being spotted and seen as suspicious by hospital personnel, he is said to have fled to some washrooms, where he climbed up through the false ceiling and entered the crawl space area.

According to LPD spokesperson Chantal

Moreau, it took around an hour for the police to locate him within the walls of the hospital.

He was placed under arrest and a file with information on the incident has been sent to the provincial Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales (DPCP) to follow up with formal charges.

Cité de la Santé security personnel are said to be working on a strategy in the meantime to assure there are no such further incidents.



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From Wayne & Tamara

## The Heart Of The Matter

**Q** I have male friends who are just friends, but my husband is so insecure about them it is driving me crazy. A year ago Christmas he took our children to visit family out of town. I could not go because of work. While my family was gone, I invited a male friend to go to Christmas Eve service with me. I told my husband, and he had no reaction.

Six months later my spouse complained I was spending too much time with other men. He insisted I have one of the children with me to act as a chaperone. A chaperone for what I do not know, because nothing ever happens. We live in a small town with nosey neighbors who report my comings and goings to my husband. These neighbors must lead such boring and miserable lives they try to make my life as miserable as theirs.

My husband claims I disrespected him by taking a friend to church when he wasn't home. Wouldn't it have been more disrespectful if I had not told him? Nine years ago he had an affair with a woman in our home. I feel he's carrying around guilt about the affair and laying it onto me, which is not fair. I have been in therapy for a year now. My husband has gone to the last two sessions with me. I discovered he married

me because he felt "obligated" since we had sex before marriage. No, I was not pregnant.

In twenty years I have never been unfaithful and I don't plan to be, but I can't go on much longer with my husband not trusting me. This has driven a big wedge between us. My therapist says everyone deserves friends, whether they be male or female. Any advice?

**A** Sue, the wedge between you was driven nine years ago when your husband brought another woman into your home. Now he says he felt obligated to marry you, which undercuts the very basis of your marriage. True or not, he is saying love isn't the reason for your relationship and never was.

We believe you when you say you don't plan to be unfaithful. At least subconsciously, though, your contact with other men is an exquisitely slow payback for your husband's affair. It is a bit like pricking him with a pin, again and again. There is a word which starts with "d" that you have both been avoiding. It is time to stop skirmishing about superficial issues and discuss the heart of the matter.

Wayne & Tamara

## When The Time Is Right

**Q** I am a 17-year-old male. I have been dating a 16-year-old girl for three months. I am sure we are both totally in love, but I am confused on a few things. First, let me say I know we are too young and too new at the relationship thing to just jump into sex. I realize this.

About a month ago we had a talk. She wondered why we never messed around and feared I didn't find her attractive. I had kissed her on the lips, but I never really kissed her. So I told her the truth. She is beautiful! I wasn't sure we were ready, and I'm clueless about relationships.

I said she could drop some hints, or even take the lead if she wanted. I am not talking sex, just messing around. I know the dangers well, so if something did happen I would know how to be protected. But anyway, why would we need to do that? It should be something we both want and not a "just because" thing. Don't get me wrong. I am ready, I just have no idea how to do it, or what to do even if she lets me.

Will she stop me if she doesn't want to go any farther? I would do nothing to hurt her or degrade her in any way. Why force something that isn't meant to be? That would just ruin it for both of us. We have signed notes "with love," but haven't said the words in

person. I guess I'm confused over her signals. Will the signs be clear-cut and bright as day, or will I have to look deeper than that?

Chris

**A** Chris, the answer is all over your letter. It isn't time yet. We aren't dismissing your feelings, though many adults would dismiss the idea young people are capable of genuine love. Yet these same adults know their children truly love them and other people important in their lives.

Feeling love, falling in love, sharing love doesn't happen on a timetable. You haven't even verbally expressed your feelings to each other. You don't know each other yet on a deep level. You don't yet know her plans, her desires, her moods, her hopes, her dreams. Intimacy takes time. It is not as simple as taking apart an engine. Sex without intimacy is a cheat. It is like being given the answers to a test without having the understanding behind the answers.

You can't hurry what is right. Love will not disappear. It will be there when you are ready. Give yourselves the opportunity to really know each other, and the signs will be clear as day.

Wayne & Tamara

Wayne & Tamara Mitchell are the authors of YOUR OTHER HALF (www.yourotherhalf.com)

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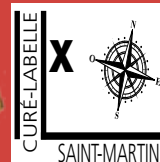
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# HOROSCOPE

Week of **JANUARY 30 TO FEBRUARY 5, 2022**

The luckiest signs this week:  
**ARIES, TAURUS AND GEMINI**



## ARIES

You are surrounded by many good people in your personal and professional life. You'll devote yourself to someone you love. However, you may be taken advantage of.



## TAURUS

You'll have a stressful week. However, it'll motivate you to focus on your health or exercise more. You enjoy the finer things in life. Therefore, try boosting your morale by occasionally treating yourself.



## GEMINI

Your plans may be delayed due to unforeseen circumstances. At work, space out your meetings to avoid putting more stress on yourself. This is an excellent time to start your own business.



## CANCER

Your friends will ask you to go on a spontaneous adventure. Nothing makes you happier than a change of scenery, even if it's just a walk in the park.



## LEO

You may be going through an emotional time. Some people don't deserve your friendship and are draining your energy. Demand the respect you deserve.



## VIRGO

You may be under a lot of pressure to make an important decision. However, take the time you need to gather all the facts and weigh the pros and cons.



## LIBRA

You may find yourself inundated with work. Although you feel stressed, putting in the extra effort now will help you advance your career in the future.



## SCORPIO

Although you prefer to keep a low profile, this week you'll be put in the limelight. You'll have to overcome your shyness and acknowledge those cheering you on.



## SAGITTARIUS

If your children no longer live with you, you may decide it's time to sell your home to enjoy more freedom. If you're in a new relationship, you may discuss moving in together in the near future.



## CAPRICORN

You'll have plenty of engaging conversations this week. At work, you'll expand your client base. Your advice will be well received and could help improve your finances.



## AQUARIUS

Money is a source of stress for many people. Give yourself a break by taking the time to contact an expert and find a suitable solution.



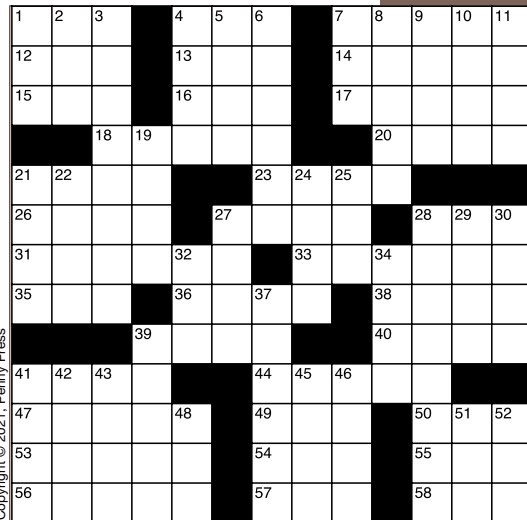
## PISCES

This week, you'll feel like you can do anything. You'll be inspired to take on a professional or personal activity that fulfills your innermost desires.

# Coffee Break

## CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 110



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### ACROSS

1. Barnyard male
4. On's opposite
7. Single printing
12. Smallest bill
13. Major-league athlete
14. Showery
15. Pigment
16. Roof goo
17. Miss \_\_\_\_ ("Dallas" role)
18. Sample
20. Youngsters
21. Mr. Redding
23. Elephant hue
26. Uncle's wife
27. Night light
28. Mister
31. Government
33. Regard highly
35. Viper's sound
36. Surrounded by
38. Pens' contents

### DOWN

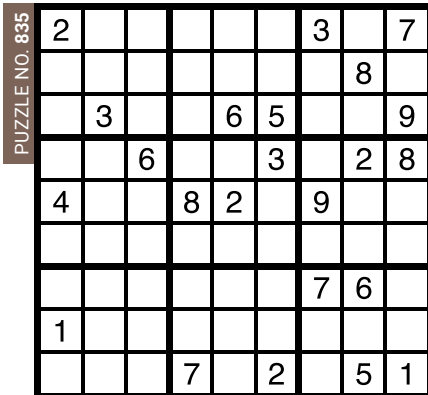
39. Blemish
40. Shopper's aid
41. At the summit
44. Bumpkins
47. Flutters
49. Chick's mother
50. Oolong, e.g.
53. Identical
54. Long fish
55. Go wrong
56. Smooth
57. Withered
58. Traitor
10. Individual
11. Watches closely
19. Wine region
21. Skiff movers
22. Monday's follower: abbr.
24. Path
25. Also
27. Business note
28. Menacing
29. Annoys
30. Remains
32. Travel guide
34. Soothing
37. Yearned
39. Very little bit
41. Fills with wonder
42. Cab
43. Almost round
45. Sidelong glance
46. Solely
48. Hog's haven
51. Important time
52. Painting, e.g.

# Sudoku

### HOW TO PLAY:

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 only once.

Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: **You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column, or 3x3 box.**

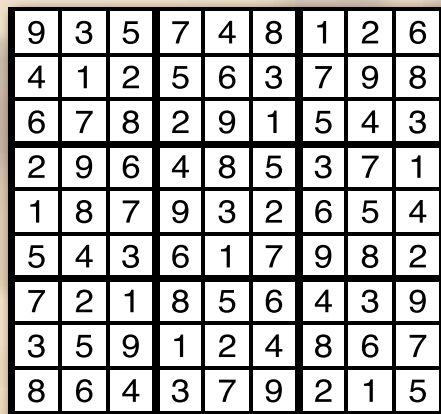


### Last Issues' Answers

## CROSSWORDS



## Sudoku



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# The little things that count.



**1**

Shovel or blow the snow on your own property and not on the road or the sidewalks.



**2**

Place bins on your own property, at the end of your driveway, not on the street or sidewalk.



**3**

Obey the signs or be prepared to follow the seasonal alternate parking rules when precipitation is announced at the locations concerned by the new signs.

Removable signs installed on parking signs or in the snow have priority over fixed signs.



**4**

If possible, park in your driveway on snow removal days.

On the street, park your car about 30 cm from the curb so that the snow removal equipment operators can pass easily, while ensuring that there is enough space on the street for an emergency vehicle or bus to pass.

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